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Things have gone fairly quiet over the last couple of months, so there isn't a lot to report on. The British National Diplomacy Championship was held at MidCon in Birmingham over the weekend of 13-15 November. It attracted the smallest number of entrants into the Diplomacy tournament ever!! Only 5 boards on the first day and 4 the second - a little worrying, maybe, but I would guess it is all coincidence - note the number of notable absentees ie Pete Mason, Peter Hawkins, Phil Day, Steve Jones, Bart Huby and Pat Lenihan, all highly rated players who regularly play at MidCon. It was good to see Xavier Blanchot and Patrice Blandin make it over from France.

I received a letter from Burrard (Buz) Eddy, 7500 212th Street SW, Suite 205. Edmonds, Washington 98020, U.S.A. He was requesting results from tournaments in the UK in order to develop a worldwide rating system - the promised development of a similar nature from Lei Saarlainen in France never appeared!? I will be sending him details, but have indicated to him that I have already set my own U.K. ratings in motion for the 1994 yearbook.

Frankly, postal Diplomacy is not going to win many more converts than it loses, it satisfies a small minority of enthusiasts, as it's ad hoc organization and slow progress of each game will not appeal to many. In order to introduce new blood we need to have fliers in the Diplomacy boxes with more information about tournaments, where they are held, and most importantly who runs them; particularly as the flier may be a little out of date by the time the game is bought.

The analogy with Chess and Contract Bridge is very real, the difference being the ability to get a multiple of seven people together, even at major tournaments, so all the more reason to centralize information about events.

As you can imagine, I am slowly coming round to the idea that Diplomacy needs a central body or organization, not necessarily for postal play as this is quite successful without any centralization, indeed it is so successful because it has a healthy freedom about it! I know that a Diplomacy organization was set up in the early 70's in the U.K., ending abruptly with little support or structure because it was an attempt to control the postal hobby! Obviously many people would want to be part of both aspects of the game, as indeed I do, but I cannot see how we are to come to decisions such as sites for tournaments ie WorldDipCon, and EuroDipCon without an awful lot of bickering.

Here in the UK we could surely support 4 tournaments a year, all the other major Diplomacy-playing countries hold more than the meagre 2 that we have. France has at least 6, the USA has at least 4, Australia has at least 4, Sweden has over 4, and even sparsely populated Norway matches the UK! A UK organization is needed as much as a World organization, but I would need help from many people in order to try and establish such an organization - anybody passionately interested? Furthermore I will be looking at a possible venue for another UK Diplomacy tournament in the near future, with a potential start date of March 1994...to be called the British Masters Diplomacy Tournament, I would hope to attract the cream of British as well as European and even worldwide players. Any help or comments on this score would be greatly appreciated.

MidCon '92 November 13-15, Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham

For the last two years MidCon has been held at the Midland Hotel in Birmingham, but returned to the Royal Angus after assurances from the management that the problems of 1989 would not reoccur. In many ways I do prefer the Angus, but the Midland has the advantage of being very central. It could very well be that the number of delegates was down due to the return, particularly in the Diplomacy tournament. If people stayed away due to the previous problems then they would be surprised by the improvements, most noticable for me was the choice and value of the meals.

I only made a quick visit on Friday night to put my name down for the Diplomacy and to put the International Yearbook up for sale.

Arrived Saturday and checked in for my 1 night stay - the room was available - dumped my clobber and mingled with the Diplomacy contingency to await the first round draw - there were notable absentees as mentioned in the editorial. The whole tournament looked a little thin on the ground with so many quality players missing - maybe the chance to allow the few newcomers to do well!

My first game as France had me lined up against Martin Clifford-King(E), Joel Hurst(G), Patrice Blandin(I), Chris Robinson(A), Dave Wreathall(R) and someone who's name I have forgotten as Turkey. France is not one of my favourite countries as recent games have borne out, Martin(E) is a very good player and previous British Champion; Joel in his first tournament game, Patrice (winner of a French tournament) assumed competent, Chris and Dave are above average experienced players while Turkey was in his 2nd(?) tournament. After surprisingly little diplomacy, a fairly standard set of openings began the game in quiet style, I took the same view opening to Pic, Spa and MAO - just pick up the neutrals and see what develops. In the autumn Belgium was snaffled by England who had already beaten me to the post in persuading the novice German to support him, not a good start for me, I had to work on Germany pretty fast. Turkey was already under pressure from an apparent Austro-Russian alliance with Italy chipping in by moving east. I did manage to persuade Germany to take Belgium for himself as England was gunning for me with attempts to take the Channel, he lost a fleet and his momentum from which he never recovered. In fact for the next 3/4 years us three western powers made little headway while Turkey was eliminated and Austria had stabbed Italy whilst his units were all shoved into the eastern part of the board. Russia also made headway against England in Scandinavia but seemed reluctant initially to attack Germany.

The crucial point in this game came when Russia made an awful attempt to stab Austria, this came as some relief to me as Austrian fleets were starting to head west after the demise of Italy. Austria now poured forces back to defend against Russia, and an uneasy peace ensured that their respective borders were well manned.

In the meantime I had attempted to invade England and was outguessed, but did get a fleet into NAO from where I supported England against the oncoming Russians. With all doors shut on him, Russia attacked Germany, and everyone took advantage by grabbing a piece for themselves, needless to say Germany did not survive long. At this stage the game ended due to the time constraint with me(F) on 7, Russia on 14, Austria on 11 and England had the remaining 2.

After all that I had a game of 'Grass' which went on for quite a while, eventually being won by Bryan Betts. Then off to the Chinese with Martin Clifford-King, Xavier Blanchot, Patrice Balndin and 'Turkey' from our Diplomacy game. Xavier, as usual, stole the show with his 'conference' on politics, EEC, armies, WorldDipCon and a few other subjects I have forgotten about.

Rounded off the day with three games of Ave Caesar - nice 'n' easy!

Up earlier than most on Sunday to be reminded of two errors in my Yearbook at the breakfast table, good hearty English breakfast!

With only 5 tables on the first day, I wondered if we might struggle to get 2 or 3 on the second day, in the end we had 4 boards. I drew Austria against Jim Mills(R), Rob Lozynskyj(T), - a formidable twosome as neighbours - Richard Biddle(E), Alastair Manning(F), Jeremy Tullett(G) and Mark Stretch(I).

With such a line up I guessed I would be squashed pretty quickly by an eastern juggernaut. I had a long chat with Italy who seemed quite amenable to an alliance without too much commitment on which way he would go, Russia and Turkey seemed contented by their parole, so perhaps my fears were well founded. Opening moves proved interesting with Russian fleet in BLA and Turkish army in Arm! Italy had not attacked me even though I left Tri open to stand off the Russian in Gal. Jeremy intimated that this 'new juggernaut' was set up, but I could not really believe that this was any better than the normal openings, the idea being that Russia takes Con to get his fleet out into AEG and Turkey takes Sev in return. Lo and behold this is exactly what happened, so I knew exactly where I stood; obviously keen to experiment!

Italy remained faithful much to the disappointment of Russia and Turkey, even so my position with two builds was not secure. Fortunately England was steaming north towards StP, but looked part of a FEG alliance. A critical misorder by Russia in 1902 helped me to secure Bulgaria and snatch the advantage from the eastern powers, and at the same time Italy was having to prepare a defence against France which kept him out of the picture. Rumania fell to me but now Germany had moved into Boh giving me little scope for expansion - he grabbed Vie temporarily as I was prepared to let it go in favour of taking Ven from the French with Italian help! In fact the FEG alliance was strting to crumble as England built anti-French fleets and had attacked Germany in Scandinavia - ideal for me as this kept the western powers embroiled for the rest of the game. I gave Venice back to Italy and from then on he was as good as gold just sitting on 4 centres until the final whistle. I was left to tidy up in the east which was achieved slowly, eliminating both Russia and Turkey on the last turn. I must admit to feeling 'chuffed' at eliminating Jim and Rob in the same season - two very good opponents. I ended the game on 13, Italy on 4 and the western powers shared the rest in roughly equal denominations. Overall I only managed 8th place, just outside the top board position - the second time this has happened in this tournament, but I did get the conolation of 'best Austria'.

Iain Bowen and Xavier were discussing WorldDipCon, of course, which I briefly passed a joined and passed a few comments. Iain was suggesting a voting system for WorldDipCon, which sounded good in theory, but we need to see the flesh on the bones, presumably in the next issue of YdG?

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The main argument left for WorldDipCon is whether France or USA should hold the tournament in 1995 - I obviously favour France for reasons I have mentioned before.

MidCon is established as one of the major events on the games calendar, but seems to attract fewer players in recent years. I do hope that the convention can be maintained with its plush hotel surroundings, making it unique in Diplomacy conventions; costs are a factor, but it is little more expensive than ManorCon which offers student accommodation. I think ManorCon has the advantage in attracting those who want a longer convention and only want to play one meaningful game of Diplomacy - it has been advertised well and has a much greater share of 'other' game tournaments. But, MidCon will survive in one form or another for many years to come, I am sure.

The WorldDipCon debate

Eagerly awaiting Iain Bowen's draft of his WorldDipCon Charter! In the meantime I

would like to state quite categorically that any 'voting rights' should be limited to those people who have already, or wish to in the future, attend a WorldDipCon outside their own country. There are a few people who want to make their mark in determining the destiny of the tournament but never actually attend one outside their own country. We have a multinational influx of people at ManorCon every year now, but few from the UK go abroad. I can count less than 10 Diplomacy players from the UK that have been to a foreign Diplomacy convention. I am sure that any meeting to vote on sites for WDC will be attended by those who are keen to travel, but if we have to limit each country to, say 10 voters, then they should be, myself, Iain Bowen, Richard Walkerdine, Pete Sullivan, Matt McVeigh, Denis Jones, Dane Maslen, Ken Simpson, plus two others - maybe Mark Nelson as he receives a lot of foreign 'zines, and one other(???).
